

## **Taskforce Meeting – February 24, 2009**

### **TASKFORCE COMMENTS**

- How are we defining townhomes? Is it common wall?
- Would like to see a comparison with Current zoning and General Plan Zoning to see if they are consistent.
- Is the purpose of including the zoning maps to give context to the discussion of density type?
- Issue of guidelines versus standards. How do you make people adhere to the standards?
- How will the guidelines apply to existing development? For example, rehabs and condo conversions? How will the guidelines apply to pending applications? And what about façade remodels?
- How do we get from standards to addressing design/style?
- What will the design review process be? Review process has to be enforceable.
- Axonometric/3D drawings showing the proposed project with adjacent properties should be part of the application. At minimum, a plan view should show adjacent properties.
- What is meant in the studies of recently built developments when it says required standards versus built conditions? Did the project not follow the plans submitted? (Required means basic standard and what was built was allowed through rezoning to a Planned Development zoning district.)
- Maubert – did not build to approved plans and building inspection did not catch it. What about issue of enforcement? Should the County make people tear down a building if it does comply with the plans?
- Issue with tearing a building down, creates a lot of waste. What do you do with it when you tear it down?
- There is a problem with implementation of existing rules; they are currently not followed.
- How can the new standards be forced to be followed? The Housing Element says that the standards for affordable housing are to be different from standards for market rate development? How will that affect design?

## TASKFORCE COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

### HEIGHT

- 25' height limit for two stories is too low (does not allow for steeper roofs even though steeper roofs may sometimes look better)
- 30' height limit for three stories is too low (roof will be flat, does not allow for steeper roofs)
- Certain architectural styles need a pitched roof (For example – two story Tudor style roof)
- Certain styles may need to be taller to look better, should allow height to do certain architectural styles correctly
- May use rules of measurement to regulate
- Need to look at adjacent buildings during design to see if architecture/height fits into existing settings

#### Leslie Gould (LG): Should there be a fixed height limit?

- Should have a height limit but if applicant can show how they work with neighbors and how the project will not block sunlight, then allow for a greater height; height limit to be based on a standard, but if context allows and privacy and views are preserved, then could go a bit higher
- San Bruno requirements – if go beyond standards, have to go through special design process
- Should have a specific height limit
- Do not like wording/language: “Require third story to be tucked under a pitched roof, to incorporate dormers for light and circulation, and be stepped back from the stories below.” Should be suggestions, should not mandate design. For example, Mike McDonald’s house (LEED) in Oakland has third story with a flat roof but the top of the structure is setback.
- There are ways that design can be explored instead of requiring or dictating how an architect should address certain issues; should not require design-specific regulations
- Should not use the word “require”
- Keep the word “require” and if the applicant proposes something different, then they should go through design review
- Issue of standards v. flexibility, what should the approach be?

- Should have standards but allow for flexibility if go further
- Should not establish a design review board
- Should have standard – if increase height, then can do it only if it is stepped back
- Height should not be completely tied to neighbors' preferences
- Write standard – highest point should be away from setbacks.
- Should look at height as something in relation to something else

LG: What do you see as an appropriate height limit?

- 30' for 2 stories, 25' on exterior and when you go inside, you can go higher
- 35' for 3 stories
- How do you measure height? (the way that is defined could allow for pitched roof)
- Taller portions could be setback

**DENSITY & MASS**

- Townhomes will have to make effort to reduce mass
- Is it wise to categorize building type by density?
- If there is a 25' height limit on townhomes, the building will fill up too much of the lot in order to get density (resulting in a bigger footprint)
- Massing is more important than height
- Issue is to consider massing and context, should look at properties next door
- Higher densities are not as appropriate in the unincorporated areas as they are in central cities; could cause reduction in standards of living
- Density is not a problem, just poor design

**OPEN SPACE**

- Issue of location versus amount of play area
- There should be a buffer between parking and play areas
- There should be more trees and landscaping in projects
- Does open space need to be landscaped (planted) or can it be decking / patio?

- Existing issue – children’s area will count as open space while no other open space is provided
- In townhomes, residents landscape their own rear yards. How do you mandate landscaping in that situation?
- How do you assure landscaping will be done and maintained by the residents?
- Should not allow any building on what is designated as private open space.

LG: Do you mandate a play area, even for fewer than 10 units?

- Yes, because the community is lacking in parks
- Don’t know if children’s area should be in the middle, near the units. Becomes an annoyance to adjacent residents
- Should specify that play areas should not be near trash, should be a decent size and usable shape, and safe from cars
- Location of children’s play area not as important as size of play area
- If there are 5/6 units or more, should require a play area
- 1,500 square feet as minimum size?
- Set size of play area up in ranges of number of units: between X and Y units, has to be Z sq. ft. big (easier to regulate)
- Community Space – not so much children’s area, but want community space where people can interact. Should have amenities such as seating, barbeques, etc.
- Should have “Project Open Space” or “Common Open Space”
- Over certain size, should contain certain children’s facilities
- There should be a buffer between play area and driveway

**SITE**

- Integrate siting with public street
- Driveway should not be walkway
- Make driveways look more walkable
- If no sidewalk, then should have special paving materials
- Could the walkway be anything?

- Driveway width and materials requirements – would be different if it were an alley versus townhomes facing each other
- Should consider different spatial arrangements between buildings depending on relationship between building and driveway
- 5' separation between building and driveway should only apply if the rear of the units face the driveway side. 5' rule should only apply if driveway is in an alley and front door is on the other side of the building
- Single family homes have trees, fencing, etc as buffers
- Townhomes facing each other need to better address privacy with staggering of windows, greater separation between buildings, use of landscaping to screen, etc.
- Have to protect privacy
- Should not allow people to look into each other
- Minimum window to window distance on primary facades/rooms?
- Need minimum distance (building to building, window to window)
- Should offset windows
- Step back the third floor
- Liberty Pointe – like front street facade (where look like separate units), dislike treatment of the back façade – it all looks the same. Same color, materials. Need variation in design, colors, and articulation. The uniformity makes the length of wall look like it goes on forever.
- Liberty Pointe – windows should not face each other, semi-private spaces, such as stairways, should face each other. Windows are not placed well.
- Density is an issue – if pack it in, will look a certain way. Bad proportions, density lends itself to bad design.
- Density is not an issue, it's an issue of bad design. Not everybody wants to live in a single family home. Design needs to improve.
- Issues of proportion of space when building is tall and also privacy issues.
- Will always be trade-offs with increased density
- Can do density but units can be small – as tradeoffs
- 5' between building units? – too small

## **BUILDING LENGTH AND DESIGN**

- Okay with 125 feet, don't want to give leeway, should just have max
- Get rid of exception, keep it at 125 feet
- Articulation requirement : put a minimum on the amount of articulation elements to include in a building design; i.e. instead of "some", use 3
- Shouldn't have articulation requirement. For example, modern design – looks good, not have any of those
- Not see anything wrong with having a semi-uniform look for Alameda County, should consider existing suburban setting
- Other parts of the area will become very dense, should allow for different designs
- Should have standards. If don't want to follow them, have to go through deeper design review process, with community input
- Exterior – do not allow stucco trim
- Materials of exterior sometimes may not meet "articulation standards"
- Guidelines will be used by planner at counter, need standards
- Front units detached in R-S and R-2? How will that work in townhomes?
- New construction should maximize street interaction
- There should be design consistency
- Building facing busy street - nobody wants to live there (hardest to rent)
- If busy street – do we have an alternative to street facing façade?
- Walkway to sidewalk to front door, doesn't have to be straight
- Types of landscaping (what about Bay Friendly Landscaping), design of landscaping? How about porches?
- Need best use of scenario for the lots we do have, maximize use
- Storage space requirement – too expensive
- Take out storage space requirement, too costly
- Like it, but also issue of illegal conversions to living space

## **PARKING**

- Parking in front versus back. Where should it be?
- Parking should be hidden. Development should be more walkable
- Parking should be consolidated in a multi-level parking structure with a green roof on top. Then the rest of the development can be accessed by walking
- Suburban feel vs. city feel
- Special paving in driveway? (huge expense - \$150,000 or more (\$16 / sq. ft. vs \$4 / sq. ft., maintenance, etc.)
- Walkability should be enhanced – separate vehicles from pedestrians
- Parking (should be located in front, designed well, hidden, so interior is walkable)
- Guest parking has to be special paving
- First 20' should be special paving to indicate entering into homes
- Reduced Parking? Define transit station, should be BART or frequent bus lines, maybe “transit corridor” is a better phrase.
- Is there dimension? Within ¼ mile to transit?
- Should it be limited to the “Main Boulevards”?
- Define “transit station”

## **NEXT MEETING**

- Monday, March 30 – 6:30pm